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ABSTRACT

This paper describes sources for meeting the information needs of travel clientele. Topics addressed include: (1) U.S. government Web sites; (2) collection development tools, including review journals, online bookstores, travel Web sites, and sources of point-by-point comparisons of guide books; (3) prominent guidebook series and publisher Web sites; (4) select travel periodicals and their publisher Web sites; (5) select commercial and educational Web sites; (6) prominent resources for tour professionals; and (7) ecotourism. (MES)

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Meeting the Needs of Travel Clientele: Tried and True Strategies that Work

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INTRODUCTION

According to *World Tourism Organization* (*WTO*) statistics reported on the web (*www.world-tourism.org*), international travel and its service components continue to be a leading multi-billion dollar global industry. Owing to tourism's fast paced and far-reaching impact, many information professionals encounter questions involving one or more sectors of travel. Since September 11, 2001, the tourism industry has faced challenges in several areas including compliance with new government initiatives, responding in a timely fashion to customer safety concerns, and sensitivity to traveler doubts. The aftershocks of that fateful day have reverberated through society in countless ways.

In a November 2001 online document, the *WTO* reported a decrease in consumer travel confidence. Uncertainty about the economy and terrorism fears prompted consumers to reconsider travel plans. Flight cancellations were particularly notable for long distance trips. Worldwide, governments and tourism industry professionals have taken cooperative measures in response to major disruptions resulting from September 11, 2001. Actions include: assisting travel operations greatly impacted by terrorist and recession events, modifying policies and procedures to meet new security levels, and ensuring continued communication to the public. The travel industry is challenged with becoming more safe, efficient and financially fit.

Tourism's global decline was the subject of a January 2002 release by the *WTO*. According to its analysis, the number of visitors has decreased by as much as thirty percent for some locations. Those hardest hit include countries heavily dependent on US tourists, destinations removed from major tourism markets, and countries predominantly Muslim. Since last September, safety conscious vacationers have selected destinations closer to home and are traveling more by rail. Tourism worldwide is expected to rebound over time as travel sectors are rebuilt and remarketed. *WTO's* newly formed Tourism Recovery Committee is indicative of the industry's commitment to recuperation.

STAYING ALERT: US GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

In recent months, the US government has allocated billions of dollars in grants and loans to the airline industry. By year's-end, hundreds of airports offering commercial services will be equipped with bomb detection equipment for checked-in luggage. At these facilities, federal personnel will carry out key security operations (e.g. law enforcement, passenger and baggage screening.) Government websites for American travelers and foreign visitors that were of moderate interest prior to 9/11 are now more closely viewed.

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The *US Federal Aviation Administration* website (*www.faa.gov*) reports on security tips for air travelers, aviation regulations, and press releases. Details pertaining to air safety travel abroad, Euro conversion, passports and visas, travel warnings, advisories and consular information are found at the *US State Department* (*www.travel.state.gov*). Another key site, *US Customs Service* (*www.customs.ustreas.gov/travel/travel.htm*), provides border inspection information, item declaration, and a 'know before you go' section. An online Recovery Center, statistics, and expert assistance are provided by *US Tourism Industries Office* (*tinet.ita.doc.gov/*). The *US National Park Service* (*www.nps.gov*) also has a site of interest to travelers. It does not convey safety or advisory information.

Business and medical advice for vacationers are available on specialized sites. The *US Commerce International Trade Administration* (*www.usatrade.gov*) offers online guidance for business travelers and expatriates. The infrastructure, customs, market conditions, and finances for a variety of countries are reported. Immunization requirements, notes about disease outbreaks, precautions for staying healthy, and voluntary cruise ship inspection ratings may be found at *US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/travel/)*.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

A bountiful, perhaps overwhelming, amount of travel and tourism material is available. In response to client inquiries about destinations, knowledge experts offer in-house materials, electronic resources, and consortially shared items. Subscriptions to online databases and materials available through local sharing agreements have greatly expanded what most librarians consider their institution's 'collection.' Librarians and other information professionals benefit from tools and techniques that assist them in making decisions about which resources they should access, borrow, or purchase for their travel-bound clients.

Booklist, Library Journal, and *Publishers Weekly* present seasonal columns and occasional feature articles to help librarians target quality tourism texts and web-based resources. Online specialty bookstores are also helpful. Title suggestions, annotations and links to sites serving many types of visitors are available at: *Curious Cat* (*www.curiouscat.com/travel/*), *Globe Corner* (*www.globecorner.com*), and *Travel Bug* (*www.swifty.com/tbug*). A host of materials for disabled and mature travelers is described at *Access-able Travel Source* (*www.access-able.com*).

Another approach, conducting a point-by-point comparison of available guides, helps librarians determine the value of individual sources relative to specific clientele queries. Several authors have utilized this technique to identify 'best' texts. David Butwin's article, "Assessing the Guidebooks," compares San Francisco texts and those for Italy. *Rick Steve's* Homepage (*www.ricksteves.com*) offers a '*Guide Book Recommendations for Europe*.' *Kingwood College Library* (*www.nhmccd.cc.tx.us/contracts/lrc/kc/travel-web.html*) provides '*Travel Guide Series,*' '*Handbooks Evaluated Bibliography,*' and '*Travel Handbooks of France*' online. Although these sources do not survey current tourism literature, they demonstrate applications of the point-by-point process.

PROMINENT GUIDEBOOK SERIES AND PUBLISHER WEBSITES

Unlike Palm-held units and other electronic devices, print guides continue to function even if dropped or run over. Travel guidebooks are affordable, durable, portable, and require no power. They continue to be very popular with travelers and are published prolifically. In guides, publishers include destination information, itineraries, advice, tips, and maps for many travel lifestyles and interests. On their Homepages, a growing number of these companies supplement, free of charge, hardcopy titles with information. Guidebook updates, e-forums, e-newsletters, maps, and links are offered to the public. Some publishers also promote their hardcopy titles by providing excerpts or, as in the case of *Rough* guides (*www.roughguides.com)*, complete texts. Libraries owning print guide collections may utilize the MARC '856' field to link travel book records to publisher Homepages. These easy access points dovetail print holdings with current electronic information.

A number of popular series are appropriate for first time, inexperienced travelers. *Fodor's* (*www.fodors.com*) concisely describes lodging, dining, shopping, and sightseeing spots. Over five hundred researchers worldwide submit their material. Each guide is written by committee process. Their *Exploring* series offer a visual treasure trove for trip planners, armchair travelers, and students alike. *Fodor's* Homepage includes a planning center, customized mini-guides, and guide updates. Two examples of popular sources designed for budget travel are *Frommer's* (*www.frommers.com*) comprehensive guides and the *Let's Go* (*www.letsgo.com*) series which is written by Harvard University students for young trekkers. *Rick Steve's* (*www.ricksteves.com*) continental budget guides and television shows present a fun, amusing approach to 'Europe through the backdoor.' While *Access* guides lack Homepage support, their approach 'makes the world your neighborhood.' Maps and texts intermingle street-by-street sights, hotels, shops, parks, and restaurants.

Cultural guidebooks provide visitors as well as armchair travelers and students with architectural, artistic, and historic perspectives. *Blue Guides*, perhaps the most scholarly series, include archaeological sites and less known places. *Baedeker's* presents full-color maps with referenced destination spots. *Eyewitness Travel* and *Knopf* guidebooks present a new, visual encyclopedic approach. Beautiful cutaway drawings of historic buildings and a bird's eye view of parks and streets in famous cities are included. Most publisher websites for cultural texts are not noteworthy. Guidebooks are marketed but provide, little if any, additional content.

Independent and off-the-beaten-path guidebooks present adventurous alternatives to conventional tours. *Lonely Planet* (*www.lonelyplanet.com*) includes authentic experiences in unusual places and third world regions. Their *World Food* series for culinary globetrotters is exceptionally interesting. In 2001, the *Society of American Travel Writers* (*www.satw.org*) (*SATW*) honored *Lonely Planet*'s outstanding Homepage with a Lowell Thomas Gold Award. Up-to-date news and events for many urban areas worldwide are accessible with *Lonely Planet's CitySync* products for handheld devices.

Prizewinning photos of unusual places and information about local customs are featured in *Insight* guides (*www.insightguides.com*). Driving and walking travelers benefit from *Michelin*'s (*www.michelin-travel.com*) texts. In their 'green' series, excellent maps, color

images, and drawings support descriptions of major tour areas, small villages, and museums. Their 'red' series, frequently written in the region's native language, is designed for the discriminating, luxury-bound traveler. Hotel and restaurant lists are featured. *Michelin*'s website offers links to sea and road trips, an e-magazine, maps, and route evaluations. *Moon Travel* (*www.moon.com*) provides backpacking trekkers and driving tourists with less traveled, out of the way excursions. Social concerns, history, topography as well as flora and fauna are discussed. *Rough* (*www.roughguides.com*) texts offer well-researched summaries of historic, cultural, and political subjects. Once an out-of-the-way location has been described in one of these guides it won't remain secluded for long!

The *Live and Work* series offers job hunting, language barriers, and taxation information for business travelers and expatriates. *Culture Shock!* guidebooks offer comparable coverage. Major business travel guidebook publishers, for the most part, do not enhance or supplement print materials at their Homepages. A premiere title outside the major guidebook scope, *Craighead's International Business Travel and Relocation Guide to 84 Countries*, describes business etiquette, protocol, social customs, and living conditions for Americans working abroad.

SELECT PERIODICALS AND THEIR PUBLISHER WEBSITES

Hundreds of magazines are available for all types of travel and lifestyles. A few notable ones are discussed in this section. Many print periodicals are well supported by publisher websites. Current issue excerpts are often available free-of-charge.

A recognized title for pleasure or business travel guidance is *Consumer Reports Travel Letter* (*www.consumerreports.org/Services/travel.html*). Unbiased opinions, money saving ideas, value comparisons, and options are offered. No advertising is accepted. Its Homepage includes travel tips and advice. *Conde Nast Traveler* (*www.concierge.com/cntraveler/index.ssf*) provides affluent tourists with advocacy and news. A readers' choice hotels 'gold list,' travel mall, Perrin Report, Ombudsman, licensed contents of *Fodor's*, photos and an e-forum are provided online. Other popular magazines include *Cruise Travel*, *Ski* (*www.skimag.com/*), *Travel America*, and award winning *Islands* (*www.islandsmag.com*).

Experienced, leisure tourists enjoy *Travel Holiday* (*www.travelholiday.com/*). Out-of-the-way as well as popular destinations, in the US and abroad, are described. Independent and group tour takers benefit from *International Travel News* (*www.intltravelnews.com*). Cruise and rail trip information, travelers' experiences, evaluations, and tips are included. Its Homepage offers advisories, currency exchange, maps and distances.

National Geographic Traveler (*www.nationalgeographic.com/traveler/*), published by the National Geographic Society, received nine *SATW* Lowell Thomas Awards in 2001. This magazine offers exceptional images, news, advice, and destination stories. Educational expeditions with authorities are discussed. Upcoming trips with experts, destination information, and an e-forum are included. National Geographic recently formed an alliance with *Earthwatch Institute* (*www.earthwatch.org/index.html*). Research volunteers and scientists, with grants from

both organizations, will be jointly conducting field explorations. *Earthwatch* is described in the ecotourism section.

Pleasure and business travelers enjoy Harry Shattuck's *Houston Chronicle Travel Guide* (*www.chron.com/content/chronicle/travel*). This column offers news, links, and tips. Archives of the latest two years and *Travelocity's* (*www.travelocity.com*) licensed contents are supplied online. In 2001, Mr. Shattuck was honored with *SATW's* Travel Journalist of the Year Gold Award.

Travel Weekly (*www.twcrossroads.com/*) is a leading industry resource for agents and tourists alike. Worldwide news, analysis, trends and forecasts are reported. Supplements contain feature destination articles. The Homepage includes columns and news. When prompted for member identification, select 'guest.' *ASTA Agency Management* (*www.astanet.com*), published by the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA), provides market, trend and news highlights. Select 'Travelers' tab to access consumer information. Another useful for professionals is *Jax Fax Travel Marketing Magazine* (*www.jaxfax.com/*). *Meetings and Conventions* (www.meetings-conventions.com/) is an authoritative source for conference issues, destinations, news and trends. Professional Convention Management Association's *Convene* (*www.pcma.org/convene/*) and *Successful Meetings* (*www.successmtgs.com*) are also valuable sources.

SELECT COMMERCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL WEBSITES

Sites referred to as 'travel malls' fold all phases of planning and purchasing into one online location. Travel malls typically track customer preferences as well as offer low fare tickets, lodging rates, and rental car reservations. Due to the range of options available, it is beneficial to review evaluation literature and compare services. A glossary for defining Internet travel terms, including those found at online travel malls, is available at *Casto Travel Inc.* (*www.casto.com/assistant/default.asp*). *Expedia* (*www.expedia.com*) and *Travelocity* (*www.travelocity.com*) are two major competitor travel malls with worldwide destination information for vacation and business visitors. In 2001, *Expedia*'s website received an *SATW* Lowell Thomas Silver Award. Five major airlines banded together in 2000 to form their own successful travel mall, *Orbitz* (*www.orbitz.com*). In the final analysis, utilizing the more personalized service of an agency may still be the best option for many trip planners.

Another source of interest to travelers is destination distances. *How Far Is It?* (*www.indo.com/distance*) establishes the latitude and longitude of two places and then calculates the direct distance between them. *MapBlast* (*www.mapblast.com*) offers directions in nine languages for cities in forty-one countries. Links to travel services, points of interest, street maps, and door-to-door driving directions are provided. *AAA RouteMaster* (*www.aaa.com:8080/routemaster/html/index_sne.html*) identifies construction hotspots, contains the licensed contents of *MapQuest* (*www.mapquest.com*), and provides driving directions for North American locations. For easy access to RouteMaster enter 'AAA+RouteMaster' as a search phrase at *Google* (*www.google.com*).

Popular sites for tracking weather conditions, temperatures, and forecasts in US and international cities include the *Weather Channel* (*www.weather.com/*) and *Weather Underground*

(*www.wunderground.com*). *Intellicast* (*www.intellicast.com*), another resource, offers special reports for skiing, golfing, and sailing enthusiasts. After engaging in a day of sports or other exciting activities, hungry travelers can utilize *Zagat Survey* rating service (*www.zagat.com*) to search restaurants by neighborhood, type of cuisine and the actual restaurant in the US or a few major cities abroad. Los Angeles' dining establishments are well represented on Zagat. Why not add some zest to this SLA conference by selecting from their list!

Online information for both national and international travelers with health concerns is available at *MCW Health Link: Travel Medicine* (*healthlink.mcw.edu/travel-medicine/*). Issues addressed include diving, pregnancy, motion, and altitude sickness. Another resource, *Travel Health Online* (*www.tripprep.com*), provides medical advice, comments on HIV, civil unrest, and road safety. The *US Centers for Disease Control* (*www.cdc.gov/travel/*), previously described in the government website section, gives detailed and timely tips for tourists. Trip planners should always remember to follow their physician's advice and not use reference tools in place of medical consultation.

International travelers are often challenged by time differences, language translation, currency exchanges and size conversions. *The World Clock* (*www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/*) supplies current time for locations worldwide. Common terms, numbers, shopping, dining, travel and directions are translated into seventy different languages at *TRAVLANG* (*www.travlang.com/languages/*). Sound files are included for pronunciation. *Oanda FXConverter* (*www.oanda.com*) provides one hundred sixty-four currency rates (updated daily) and pocket size cheat sheets for travelers. Ten different clothing size charts for US and international measurements are found at *FROMTO.AS* (*Fromto.as/clothing.htm*).

Hostel lodging attracts adventurous vacationers. *Elderhostel* (*www.elderhostel.org*) presents older trekkers with affordable and educational experiences. *HOSTELS.COM* (*Hostels.com*) provides a worldwide directory, e-forum, and tips on inexpensive adventures for young tourists. *The University of Michigan International Center* (*www.umich.edu/~icenter/*) has links to useful sites (e.g. scholarships), travel tips, and opportunities for students working, studying, or traveling abroad.

PROMINENT RESOURCES FOR TOUR PROFESSIONALS

A helpful source for defining specialty jargon is the *World Travel Dictionary: the Dictionary for the Travel Industry*. Another expert tool, *Travel Industry Association of America* (*www.tia.org*) offers pricing and legislation information, news, and statistics online. Other valuable reference sources are commonly published on an annual, or more frequent, basis. Notable titles are included below. Many hardcopy titles are supplemented or enhanced by their publishers' websites. Others merely promote their products online or limit online access to subscribers. Unlike most expert sources, *Weissmann Travel World* and *Star Service: the Critical Guide to Hotels and Cruise Ships* do not accept advertisements.

More than seventy-five thousand tourism contacts in three hundred thirty countries are contained in the *World Tourism Directory*. This multi-volume resource, published in conjunction with the *WTO* and *World Travel and Tourism Council* (*www.wttc.org*), also includes thousands

of Internet addresses. The *World Travel Guide and Atlas* (*www.travel-guides.com/navigate/world.asp*), another impressive work, provides exhaustive information about virtually every country's passport and entry requirements, currency, culture, and contacts. It's Homepage details major airports and ski resorts. Products are also available for Palm-held devices and PCs. *Tourism Offices Worldwide Directory* (*www.towd.com*) offers links to commercial tourism offices, government sites, conventions, and visitor bureaus around the globe.

Directory of Hotel and Motel Companies, an American Hotel and Lodging Association publication, lists corporations and individual facilities state-by-state. This unique source is also available in CD-ROM and diskette format. Other quality hotel reference tools include *Hotel and Travel Index, Official Hotel Guide, Official Meeting Facilities Guide,* and *World Hotel Directory.*

Ship profiles, deck plans, booking information, ports of call, and sailing schedules are included in the *Official Cruise Guide*. North, Central and South American cruises and hotels are reviewed and rated by *Star Service: the Critical Guide to Hotels and Cruise Ships*. *Cruise Critic* (*www.cruisecritic.com*), a tool for first time and seasoned water-bound tourists, is outside the domain of professional resources but may be of use to agents. In 2001, the *SATW* awarded *Cruise Critic* a Lowell Thomas Bronze Award. Another source beyond the scope of expert literature that may be of interest to tourism specialists is the *US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/travel/).* This site, previously described in the government website section, includes international cruise ship sanitation inspection data.

Weissmann Travel World (*www.weissmann.com*) includes destination itineraries, concierge advice, maps, and insider tips for tour operators. Reports for all countries of the world, thousands of cities, and ports of call are accessible. Recipes, travel tales, a currency converter and world clock are 'coming soon' to its Homepage. Products are available in CD-ROM, diskette and online formats. Through *Weissmann's* partnership with *Neohand* (*www.neohand.com*), one hundred twenty-four *City Profiles* and over fifty *Port and Resort* documents are available for handheld units.

Thomas Cook Timetable guides offer rail, shipping and ferry schedules worldwide. *OAG* (*www.oag.org*) print and database products, including those for wireless devices, are leading tools for all types of flight information. News and OAG Airline of the Year winners are provided online. Subscribers may access air travel details.

ECOTOURISM: A TREND

Leisure visitors enjoy nature-conscious experiential opportunities that offer a win-win situation for a region's travel industry and natural habitat. Ecotourism was introduced abroad in the 1980s and in the United States in the early 1990s. The *WTO's* website (*www.world-tourism.org*) describes this trend and discusses United Nations' International Year of Ecotourism (2002) events. *WTO* reports covering specific areas of ecotourism and sustainable tourism are also listed. Some title entries contain a summary or abstract of the hardcopy text. *The International Ecotourism Society* Homepage (*www.ecotourism.org*) is another useful site. *The Ecotourism Observer*, its online magazine, includes news and feature stories.

Ecologically sound accommodations are often referred to as 'green lodging' facilities. In these locations, environmental conservation awareness motivates managers to assess and rewrite their procedures and policies. 'Green' accommodations implement recycling strategies that save natural resources (e.g. water and energy) and manage waste more efficiently.

Approximately forty worldwide certified establishments are described at the *Ecotel Certification* website (*www.hvsecoservices.com/ecotelcollection.htm*). *Ecotel* approved hotels include luxury establishments that have implemented exemplary recycling, waste management, and community outreach programs. New York City's Benjamin Hotel, Arizona's Miraval Resort and Hyatt Regency at Gainey Ranch are among the US certified properties. *Green Hotels Association* (*www.greenhotels.com*), another notable lodging site, features facilities worldwide utilizing environmentally conscious devices, products and services (e.g. eco-friendly soap, laundry detergent, and optional daily linen or towel changes).

Destinations, government agencies, and organizations supportive of ecotourism are located at *Great Outdoor Recreation Pages* (*GORP*) (*www.gorp.com*). *GORP* offers national and international parks, a travel planner, traveling schedules and special interests (e.g. seasonal picks, family trips). *Away.com* (*Away.com/index.adp*) includes activities for arts, culture and historic travel. Personal narratives, itineraries, and customized planning are also presented.

Earthwatch Institute (*www.earthwatch.org/index.html*), another well-recognized site, describes volunteer expeditions with scientists and educators who conserve natural resources and cultural heritage. This site is organized by region, month, subject, and time frame. *Clean Beaches Council* (*www.cleanbeaches.org*) awards a 'Blue Wave Certification' for selected locations. Beaches are recognized for water quality, environmental sustainability, cleanliness, erosion management, habitat conservation, and safety.

Recreation.gov (*www.recreation.gov*) features campground reservations, national weather service forecasts, and maps. The 'recreation search' provides customized planning. Users select a state, activity, or agency from the list (e.g. National Park Services, Tennessee Valley Authority). A superb site, *National Recreation Reservation Service* (*www.reserveusa.com*), offers an availability calendar and a list of campsites. Cabin amenities (e.g. toilets, bunk beds, stoves) and disability services are described.

Print resources contain case studies of countries, history, and trends. *Ecotourism in the Less Developed World* and *Encyclopedia of Ecotourism* are highly recommended. A related resource, *Tourism Ecolabelling: Certification and Promotion of Sustainable Management* introduces eco-certifying institutions and explains evaluation processes. Specific trends and a directory of tourism ecolabels are provided. *Ecotraveller's Wildlife Guide* and *Hidden* series include lodging, and historical background information for selected destinations. *Great American Learning Vacations* and the *Guide's Guide to National Parks* series are two other notable publications.

CONCLUSION

Many quality resources are available to professionals assisting travel-bound clientele. Over the past several months, knowledge managers have become more keenly aware of government advisory and safety information. While travel destinations, products, and services have experienced varying levels of disruption, the global travel industry is said be in a recovery mode and is slowly regaining its equilibrium.

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